

Lost Grove Lake

WINTER NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2007

Scott County
Soil and Water
Conservation
District

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Our Mission:

The mission of the Scott County Soil and Water Conservation District is to provide leadership in conservation and the wise use of soil, water and related resources through a balanced, cooperative program that protects, restores and improves those resources.

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PLANNING TO PLANT MORE CORN????

Due to increased demand and the price for corn, we have had several inquiries from producers asking about adding a year of corn to their existing conservation plan. If you are considering adding more corn to your current rotation, you need to revise your conservation plan.

Generally, we have found that on your higher yielding soils located on 7% slopes or less (C slopes) that this can work if you use conservation tillage. For the majority of your "D" or steeper soil types, adding an additional year of corn, without adding additional conservation practices to compensate for the additional tillage and loss of residue, will cause additional erosion and compliance is-

sues.

In addition to updating your conservation plan when you change crop rotation, it is advised that you update any plan older than 2002. Conser-



vation plans should also be updated when operators change, or you do anything that is different from your current conservation plan. Conservation plans are used

to insure all tracts meet compliance requirements, so it is important to make sure your plan is updated and reflects your current farming practices.

As an operator, you also need to make sure that you are controlling ephemeral gully erosion. Traditionally this has been accomplished through the use of waterways. However, modern tillage practices, such as No-Till, can be used along with contour farming or cross-slope farming to control these potential problems. If you need to update your conservation plan or have any questions, please call our office, (563) 391-1403 ex. 3, to make an appointment with one of our certified conservation planners.

GET PAID NOT TO WORK

As the snow starts to melt and you are examining your fields for planting don't forget about the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) offered by your Scott County USDA office. CRP is a **government program that pays you to not work** your land. Under this program, you will be paid an annual rental rate based on soil type and number of acres. In addition, most practices receive an up-front bonus payment of \$100/acre for a 10 year contract, or \$150/acre for a 15 year contract, 90% cost

share to install the practice, a maintenance payment, and an additional 20% incentive added to your annual rental payment. Once the practice is established maintenance is very minimal, so you are being paid not to work.

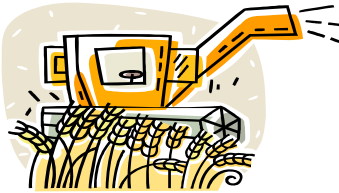
If you enjoy nature or hunting on your land, CRP offers several practices designed to create and reestablish conservation cover and natural areas that will bring back the wildlife for your enjoyment. These practice require the planting of native

grasses and forbs that will attract pheasants, deer, and other wildlife by offering them the shelter and food they need to survive. They have the added benefit of reducing sediment lost and run-off. These practices include wetland restoration, riparian buffers, filter strips and habitat buffers for upland birds (usually along fence lines). CRP even offers a few practices to enhance wildlife in pastureland areas by establishing habitat buffer strips along perennial flow streams.

ECONOMICS OF ETHANOL

On February 7th, Jim Jensen from the ISU Extension service gave an exciting and educational talk on the economics of ethanol. The combination of consistently higher corn prices and the recent buzz about increased funding for alternative fuels (ethanol and bio-diesel) have caused many producers to consider adding additional acres of corn this fall. Jim advised those in attendance to exercise some prudence when planting however. Many of the alternative fuel plants being discussed are only in the planning stages, and those that are in production are not operating at full capacity. The primary problem that will hinder some of the ethanol plants is the high corn

prices because the profitability of ethanol decreases as the price of corn increases. Basically, when corn prices are consistently at \$4.00 a bushel the profit for ethanol is \$0.00. This will of course change if the price for ethanol, which is currently \$1.91 a gallon, increases as demand increases. Jim pointed out



that as more acres are placed in corn, and fewer into beans, the price for soybeans may also increase be-

cause the demand for soybean food and oil is on the rise.

Jim explained that ethanol will change farming in many ways. As ethanol production increases, there will be more by-products, especially Distillers Grains (DG). As the amount of DG's goes up, the price will come down, and can be used to feed cattle making producers less dependent on corn as a source of protein for their animals. Furthermore, if everything stays on track for ethanol production, by 2012 Iowa will need to import corn to meet the needs of the manufactures and livestock producers. This is outstanding considering the fact that Iowa is and will remain America's number one corn producing state.

LAKE HAPPENINGS

The Upper Lake is FULL!!! As of the first of the year, the upper 50 acres of Lost Grove Lake are filled and running through the 220th causeway culvert. With all the rains received in December, the lake filled up about six feet in two weeks and began running through the culvert. This is encouraging news because it indicates that the main lake will easily fill-up in the projected 3-5 years time span, once the main dam is completed. The upper lake will stay at its current depth until the main dam is completed. It will then raise an additional three feet.

Other activities at the lake include a contractors meeting held February 15th. John Austin (Iowa DNR) and Laurie Ahnrdt (NRCS) hosted the pre-bid meeting that offered contractors a view of the locations of the last five sediment basins. Bids were due to the DNR engineering office by February 21st. The sediment basins have to be constructed and seeded by July 2007. Four of the five basins are located on the north side of the upper 50 acres between Utica Ridge Road and 220th avenue. The fifth basin will be located to the west of 220th and south of the lake. These basins will result in a healthier lake by trapping sediment, chemicals, and organic run-off, and keeping it from reaching the lake. Also, Snapshot water monitoring will be held on May 8th. We are in need of volunteers to help collect and sample water from the creeks around the county. If you would like to help please call the office at 563-391-1403 ex.3.



Above: Water running out the culvert 1/3/07
Right: The Upper Lake full 1/3/07

